GENDER EQUITY

Distribution of Females and Males
In the British Columbia
School System

1991

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND
MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE FOR MULTICULTURALISM
AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Province of
British Columbia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intent of this report is to provide information on the current status of girls and women in the B.C. education system. The highlights of the findings are summarized below under two headings: students, and teachers and administrators.

Students

- There is roughly an equal number of male and female students in the public school system.
- Females are consistently under-represented in mathematics and science (for example: Grade 12 geometry, 41% female; Grade 12 physics, 24% female).
- Similar numbers of males and females go on to post-secondary education (for instance, 53.2% of university under-graduates are female), but female post-secondary students are under-represented in traditional *"male"* subject areas.
- Proportionately fewer females go on to graduate studies (44% female vs. 56% male).

Teachers and Administrators

- Females make up 60.16% of the B.C. education system's professional staff. Proportionately more males are employed full-time than are females (96.3% male vs. 76.9% female).
- In elementary and secondary schools, females represent 66.2% of teachers and 19.8% of principals. In secondary schools, female teachers represent 35.2% of teachers and are a minority in traditional male subjects such as math and science.
- Females represent 63.4% of the Ministry of Education employees; 90.9% of clerical positions and 31.2% of management positions are filled by women.
- Females represent approximately 17% of University faculty and are concentrated in the fields of education, arts, and human and social development.

I

INTRODUCTION

The 1988 Sullivan Royal Commission on Education recognized that, despite many advances women have made in improving their status, they are still largely confined to lower paying, lower status jobs. The Commission also recognized that due to the lack of appropriate curricula, textbooks and role models, the education system perpetuates gender stereotypes. The Commission concluded that the education system must take responsibility to ensure that positive steps are taken to address the gender imbalance in the education system.

To this end the Commission recommended that:

- Counselling practices be developed to ensure that female students consider a wide range of appropriate courses.
- Curriculum material be monitored with a view to eliminating gender stereotypes and including content about the contribution of women.
- Hiring practices emphasize the need for more women in management and administrative positions.
- Flexible working conditions be established to allow women to combine professional employment and child rearing.

These recommendations were reinforced in the Ministry's Policy Directions of January, 1989. The Policy Direction on gender equity was to ensure that the school system reflect the changing role of women by reviewing learning materials and hiring practices, by providing information on non-traditional career opportunities, and by monitoring and reporting data on gender issues annually.

This Policy Direction is being implemented through Working Plan #1 (1989-1999) and Working Plans #2 and #3 (1990-91), with subsequent revisions as required over the next decade. The goals of the working plans on gender equity are to:

- Achieve gender equity in curriculum and learning materials.
- Achieve gender equity in policies and practices in the education system.

Specifically, the plan for 1991-92 includes establishing bridging positions within the Ministry, developing curriculum and learning materials providing information to students about non-traditional career opportunities, reviewing hiring and promotion practices in school districts, and collecting and reporting gender-related data on the education system.

The intent of this report is to provide information on the current status of girls and women in the B.C. education system. We begin with the B.C. Public School System, comparing the enrollment, subject selection, and graduation rates of boys and girls. Then elementary and secondary schools, district and Ministry staffing are examined to determine what gender imbalances exist in staffing in these areas. This is followed by a brief review of the gender distributions of male and female students and faculty in B.C. post-secondary institutions.

II

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

A. Public School Students

Total enrollment in the public school system was 530,807 in the 1990-1991[1] school year. This includes 163,847 students in K-Gr. 3, 280,432 students in Gr. 4-10, 86,528 students in Gr. 11-12 and 10,871 special ungraded students.

The distribution of girls and boys is fairly balanced throughout kindergarten to Gr. 12 (48.2%, 48.6% and 49.9% female in K-Gr. 3, Gr. 4-10 and Gr. 11-12, respectively.) There is an imbalance, though, in the gender distribution of special ungraded students, where girls make up 39.2% of the total.

1. Subject selection by female students

Although there is an approximately equal number of boys and girls in the school system, they are not equally distributed across subject areas. Traditionally, once girls reached secondary level they show a decreased interest in mathematics, science and computer studies. This tendency continues today.

Exhibit II-1 shows the percentage of female students enrolled in various Grade 11 and 12 mathematics courses in B.C. for 1989-1990. Exhibits II-2 and II-3 give enrollment figures for computer studies and science. With the exception of consumer math and biology, less than 50% of Grade 12 students enrolled in these courses are females. Females make up only 18 to 23 percent of the students enrolled in trade mathematics, physics and computer studies.

Participation has increased slightly in some areas since 1986 but the slow rate of increase does little to alleviate concerns of gender imbalance.

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[1] *Statistics from the 1990-91 school year are used throughout this report whenever possible. If these are not available then those from the most recently available school year are used.*

EXHIBIT II-1
Percent of students who are female in B.C. high school math, 1986 , 1988 and 1990

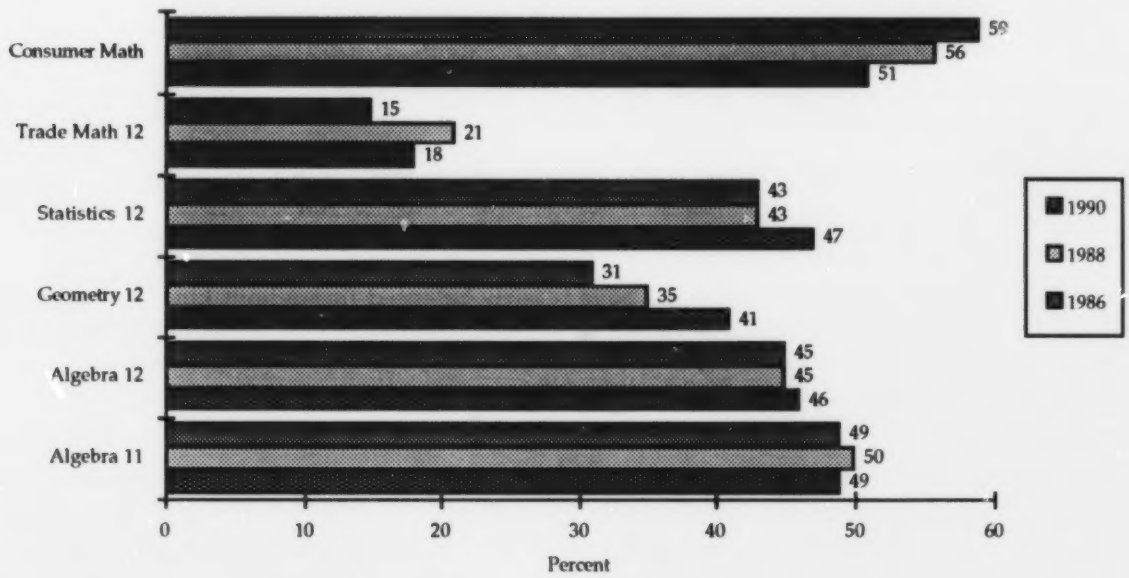
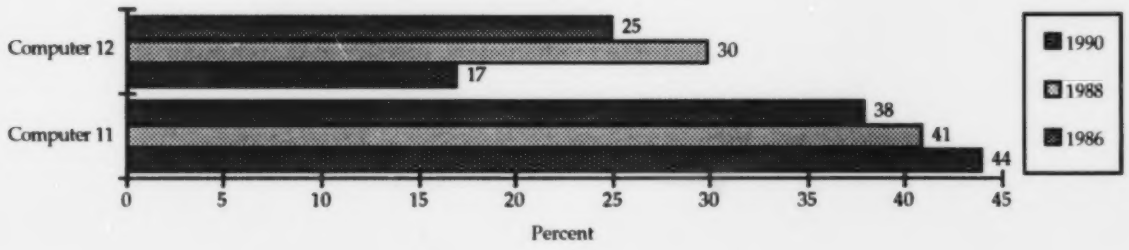
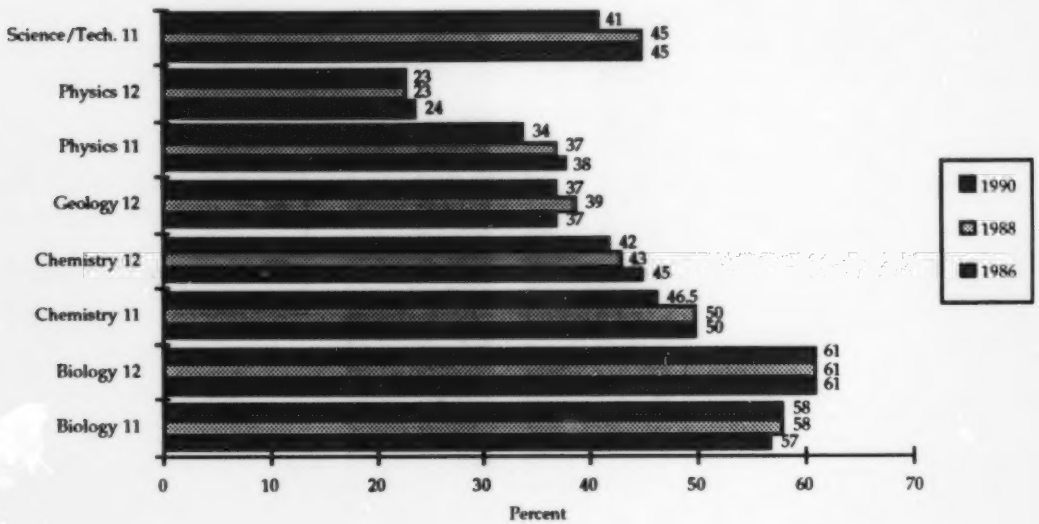


EXHIBIT II-2
Percent of students who are female in B.C. high school computer studies, 1986, 1988 and 1990



Source: **Data Systems Management, Ministry of Education**

EXHIBIT II-3
Percent of students who are female in B.C. high school science, 1986, 1988 and 1990

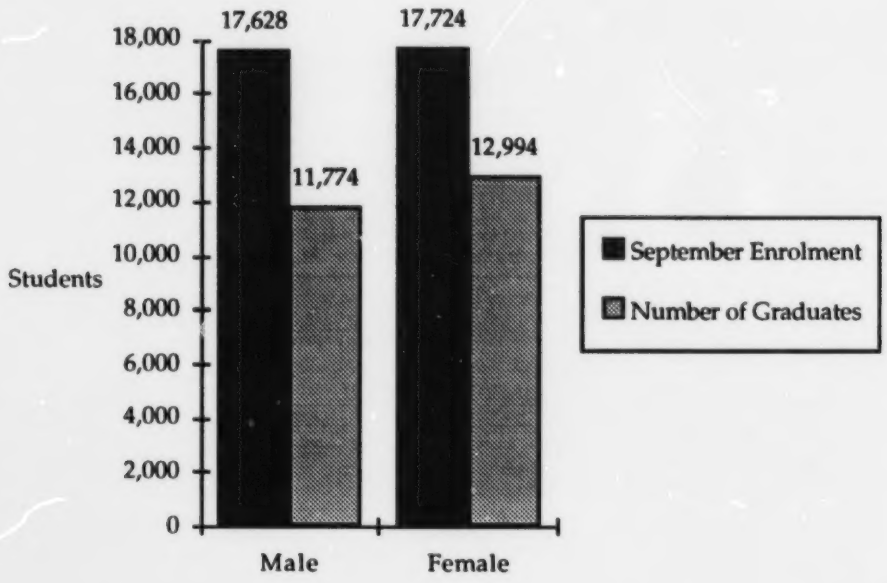


Source: **Data Systems Management, Ministry of Education**

2. Public school graduation rates

One indication of the success of the school system is the number of students who successfully graduate from Grade 12. In the 1990-91 school year, more female students (73.3%) successfully completed requirements for graduating than did male students (66.8%). Exhibit II-4 portrays this difference in graph form. It contains the September 30, 1989 enrollment figures and the number of students who graduated in 1990, broken down by gender.

EXHIBIT II-4
B.C. Grade 12 graduates by gender, 1989-1990



Source: **Data Systems Management, Ministry of Education, B.C. Report 1561/1991**

B. British Columbia Education System Professionals

In the 1990-91 school year, 33,386 professional staff were employed in the B.C. education system. Of these, 60.1% were female. However, only 76.9% of the female staff were employed full time, compared to 96.3% of male staff.

In this section we examine the gender distribution of all positions in the B.C. education system for the 1990-91 school year, including both schools and district professional staff. This will enable us to determine the types of positions or roles occupied by women and men in the education system and provide insight into the kinds of role models available to students.

As the Sullivan Royal Commission noted, there is an absence of appropriate leadership models in the school system for young women.

1. Elementary and secondary school staff

Exhibit II-5 gives the staffing breakdown in all B.C. schools during 1989-90, and the percentage of females in each position. Although women hold 60.16% of all positions in elementary and secondary schools, they are under-represented in all administrative positions. This under-representation is especially dramatic in the highest positions, where only 19.08% of principals and 26.85% of vice-principals are women.

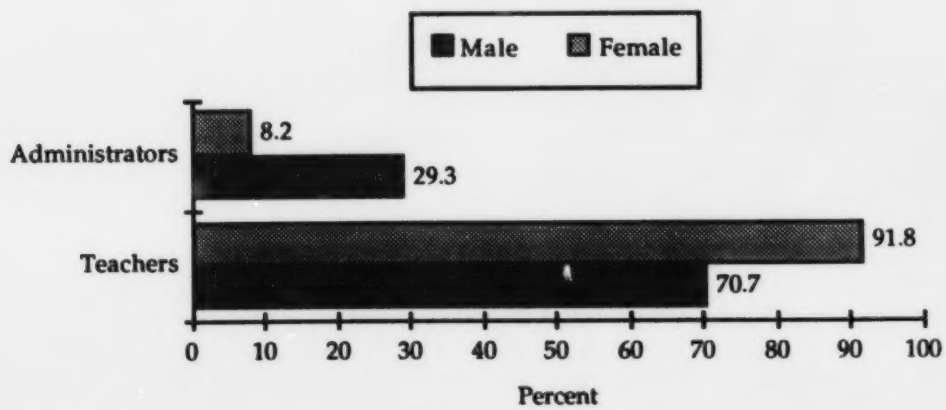
EXHIBIT II-5
School staffing by gender and position (B.C. 1989-90)

Position	Total	% Female
Regular Teacher	27,320	66.22
Principal	1,467	19.08
Vice-Principal	1,050	26.85
Department Head	2,367	33.20
Teacher/Administrator	547	48.08
Total	32,751	60.16

Source: **Data Systems Management, Ministry of Education Report.**

Another way to look at this issue is to compare the distribution of female staff with that of male staff. Exhibit II-6 contains a graph of these distributions for the 1990-91 school year. Only 8.2% of female professional staff were administrators and 91.8% were teachers, whereas 29.28% of male professional staff were administrators and 70.72% were teachers.

EXHIBIT II-6
Gender distribution of elementary and secondary school staff, 1990-91



2. School district staffing

Exhibit II-7 gives the professional staffing breakdown in all B.C. school districts, and the percentage of females in each position. Women hold 40.81% of all professional positions in the district offices, but are under-represented in administrative positions. The consultant, coordinator and helping teacher positions reflect the supportive roles traditionally open to women in the workforce.

EXHIBIT II-7
District staffing by gender and position (B.C. 1990-91)

Position	Total	% Female
*Superintendent	160	8.13
**Secretary-Treasurer	92	19.57
Director of Instruction	134	20.15
Supervisor of Instruction	35	42.86
Teacher Consultants	112	65.18
Coordinator	118	57.63
Helping Teacher	105	66.67
Other Instructors	121	60.33
Testing and Assessment	10	50
Total	887	40.81

*includes Deputy and Assistant Superintendents
**includes Assistant Secretary-Treasurers

Sources: **Data Systems Management, Ministry of Education Report, and Contacts in Education 1990-91, Ministry of Education**

3. Professional teaching standards

The current qualifications for new teachers in B.C. are a 4- or 5-year professional degree. Previously, teachers were required to have a standard teaching certificate but did not need a degree. As a consequence of this change in requirements, some teachers have degrees and some have certificates. There are also a small number of teachers that do not have either but are teaching with letters of permission.

Exhibit II-8 gives a breakdown of teaching qualifications by gender for all B.C. education system staff in 1990-91. While 60.1% of education system professional staff are women, only 56.68% of those with a professional degree are women. Of the females in the teaching force, 82.81% have a professional degree, compared to 95.31% of male teachers (see Exhibit II-9). In other words, 17.29% of female teachers do not have a degree, compared to only 4.69% of male teachers.

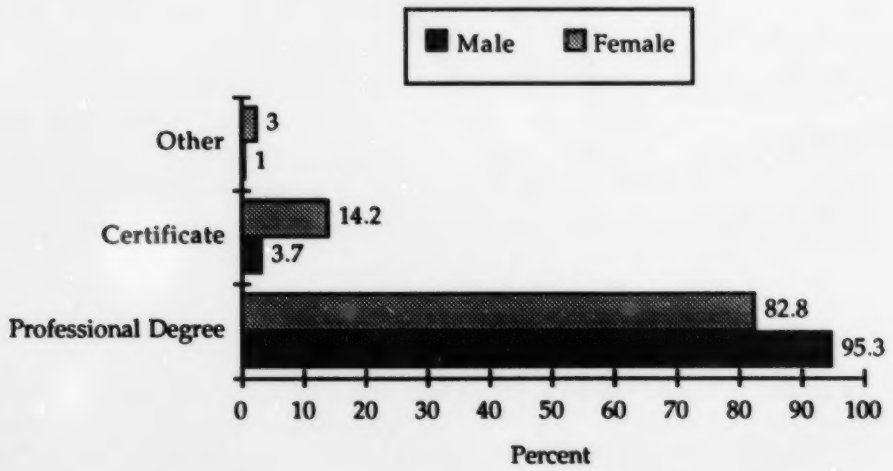
EXHIBIT II-8
Qualifications of B.C. education system staff, 1990-91

Qualifications	Total	% Female
Professional Degree	29,318	56.68
Standard Teaching Certificate	3,337	85.34
Instructor's Diploma	42	26.19
Letter of Permission	131	64.88
Other	558	89.42

[1] *The totals are less than the total number of staff since not all reported.*

Source: **Data Systems Management, Ministry of Education Report 2062/1991.**

EXHIBIT II-9
Distribution of teaching qualifications of male and female B.C. education system staff in 1990-91

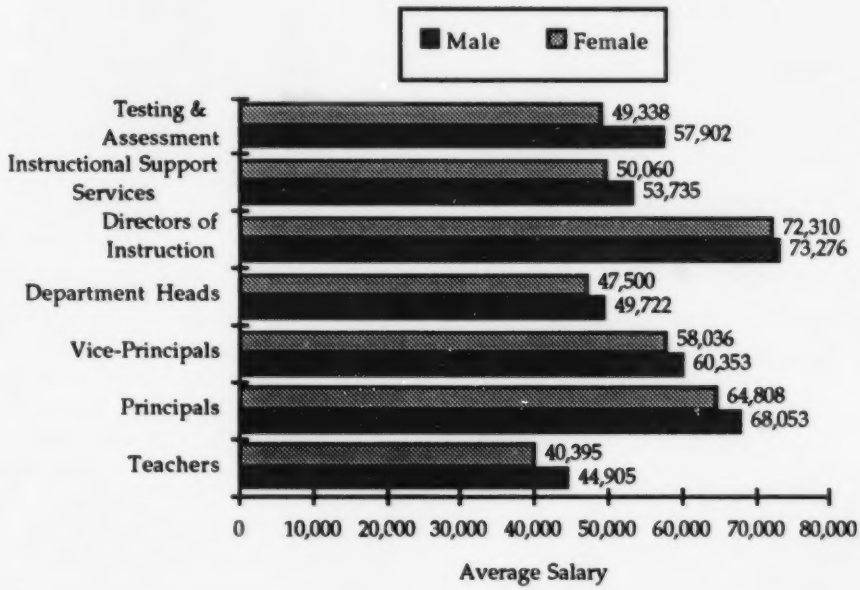


Females represent a large portion of those holding non-professional qualifications, suggesting both systemic barriers to training and implications for career options and financial benefits.

4. Salary levels of male and female B.C. education system staff

Exhibit II-10 give the average salary levels of males and females in the B.C. education system in 1989-90. Theoretically, salaries should be the same for males and females in the same position, with the same qualifications and experience. However, the net impact of systemic barriers to training and career opportunities is reflected in the lower average salaries of female staff.

EXHIBIT II-10
Average salary levels for professional staff in the B.C. Education system, 1990-91



Source: **Data Systems Management, Ministry of Education Report 2063/1991**

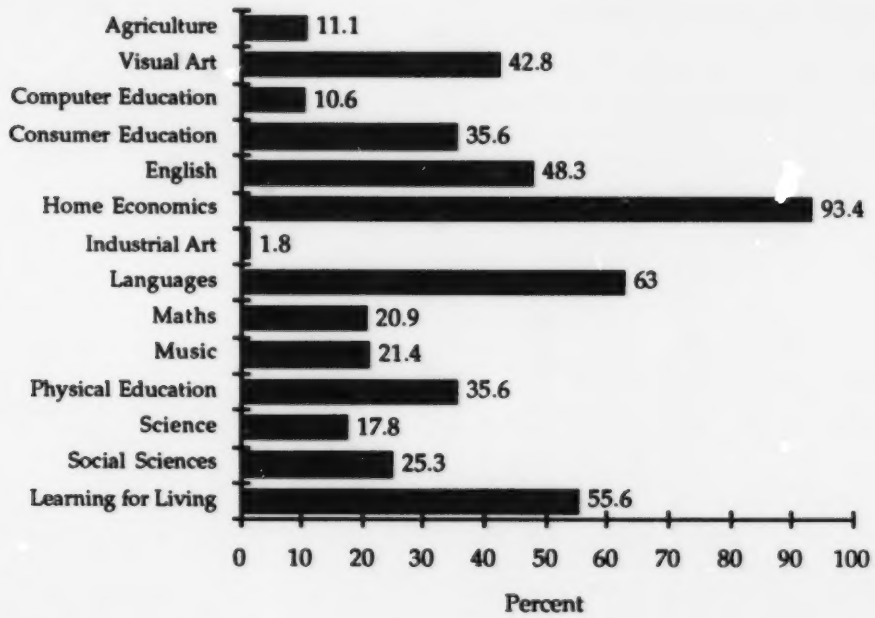
5. Secondary teachers' subject assignment

Secondary female teachers (35.22%) are a minority in a setting where female students represent 48.9% of the students. This imbalance is even greater with the consideration that at the secondary levels women are clustered at the lower grades and that almost 13% of their ranks are working part-time.

Ministry of Education data indicates that 5,468 females were teaching at the secondary level in 1990-91. The subject assignments of these teachers are shown in Exhibit II-11. It is clear from this graph that women are not evenly distributed across subject areas. Female teachers are a small minority in several key areas: computer education (10.6%), mathematics (20.9%), science (17.8%), social studies (25.3%).

Male and female segregation in such teaching areas as agriculture, science, mathematics, computer education, home economics and industrial arts continues to reflect traditional roles and perpetuate stereotyping.

EXHIBIT II-11
Percentage of secondary school teachers who are females, assigned to each subject (B.C., 1990-91)



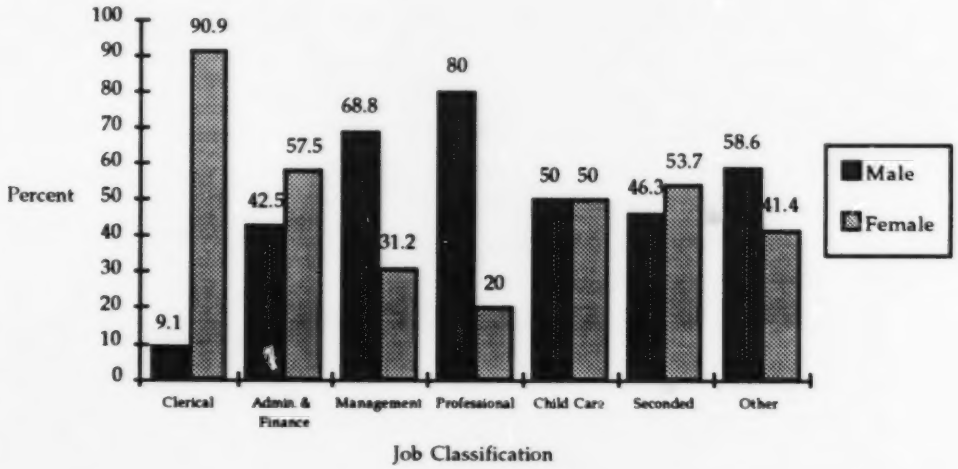
Source: **Data Systems Management, Ministry of Education Report 2088/1991**

C. British Columbia Ministry of Education

Within the Ministry, females represent 63.04% of the workforce and hold 90.9% of clerical positions (see Exhibit II-11). In contrast, men comprise 36.96% of the workforce and hold 68.8% of the management positions.

Although females occupy 60.08% of the Junior Administration / Finance / Education / Research classifications, these positions represent helping/consulting roles traditionally accessible to women, and do not usually include supervision or management responsibilities.

EXHIBIT II-12
Gender distribution by job classification, Ministry of Education, 1991



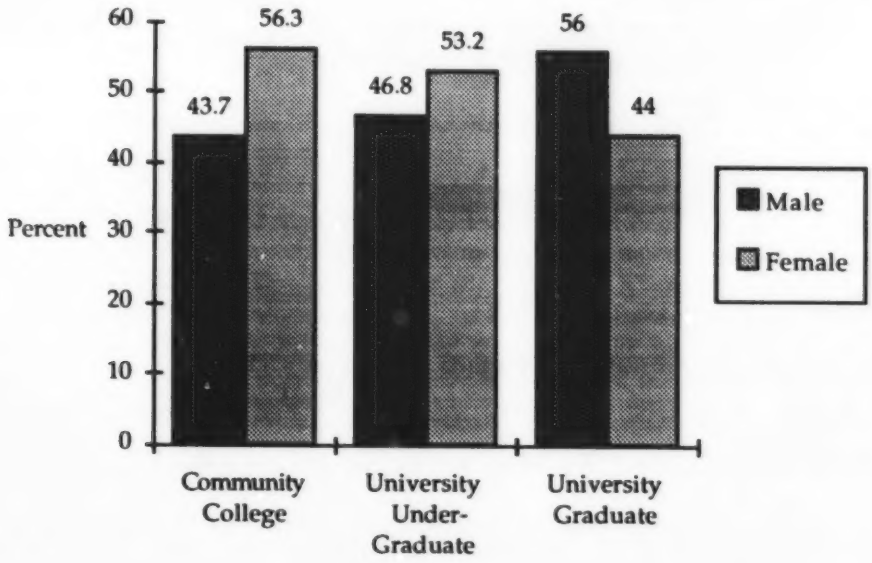
III

BRITISH COLUMBIA POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

In this chapter we explore what happens to high school graduates who continue formal education.

Exhibit III-1 gives the percentage of male and female students who were in community colleges, and in university under-graduate and graduate programs in B.C. in 1988-89. Considerably more college and under graduate students are female. However, 55.96% of graduate students are male—a substantial departure from the male—female mix shown at the community college and under-graduate levels.

EXHIBIT III-1
Percentage of male and female students enrolled in post-secondary schools in B.C. during 1988-89

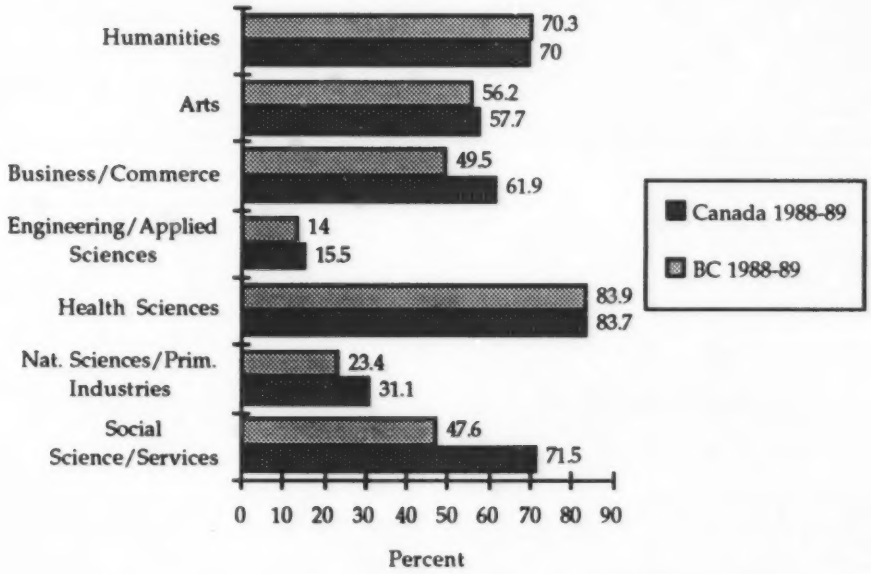


Source: **Statistics Canada, Education in Canada Vol.81-220-229.**

A. Community College Enrollment

The percentage of female students enrolled in each field in community colleges in B.C. and in Canada as a whole is displayed in Exhibit III-2. The B.C. enrollment picture is similar to the national picture, although B.C. falls behind the national average in some fields. Statistics Canada reports that B.C. female enrollments in business/commerce (49.51%), natural sciences (23.40%) and social sciences (47.57%), lag behind the national averages; the largest difference is found in the social sciences/services field.

EXHIBIT III-2
Community college full-time female enrollment in Canada and B.C., 1988-89



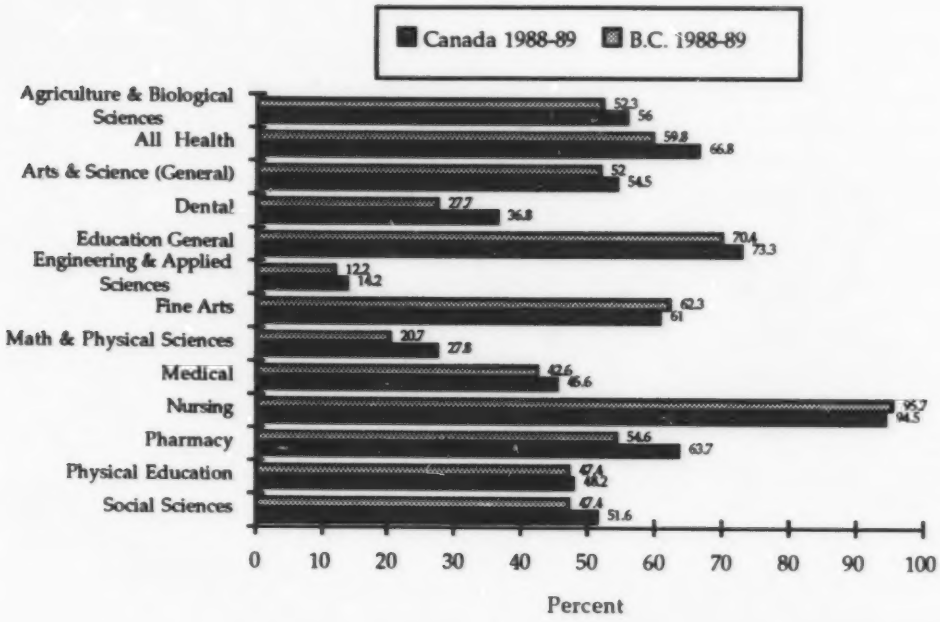
Source: **Statistics Canada, Education in Canada, Catalogue 81-229.**

B. Under-Graduate University Enrollment

The percentage of female students enrolled in each field during 1988-89 in universities in B.C. and in Canada as a whole is displayed in Exhibit III-3. As with community college enrollments, B.C. enrollment is similar to the national average.

There are some notable differences between male and female enrollment patterns. Female enrollment is substantially higher than male enrollment in nursing (95.7%), education (70.4%), and fine arts (62.3%). In contrast, female enrollment is exceptionally low in both math/sciences (20.7%) and engineering/applied sciences (12.2%).

EXHIBIT III-3
Percentage of under-graduates enrolled in each subject area who are female, in Canada and B.C., 1988-89

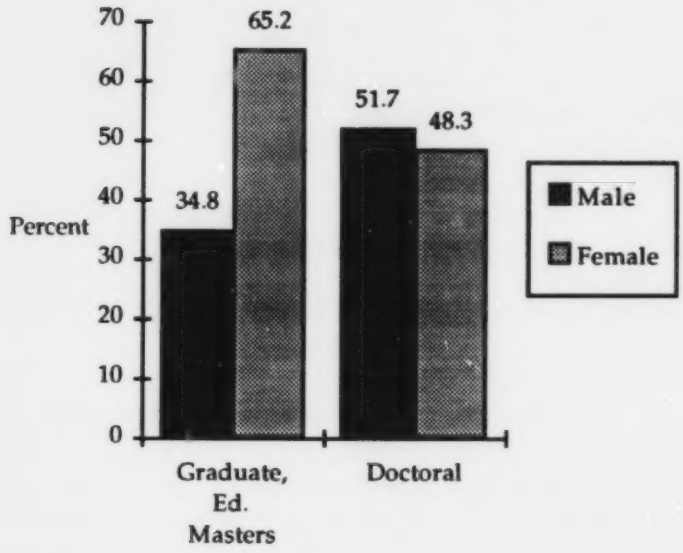


Source: **Statistics Canada, Education in Canada Vol .81-220, 81-229.**

C. Graduate University Enrollment in Education

Exhibit III-4 portrays the percentage of male and female students enrolled in the Education Faculty, Graduate Studies, in British Columbia during 1988-89. Clearly, women are entering graduate studies in this field in significant numbers. An impressive 65.2% of Master of Education students are female, while 48.3% of doctoral students in education are female.

EXHIBIT III-4
Percentage of male and female students in graduate studies in education, B.C., 1988-89



Source: **Statistics Canada, Education in Canada, Vol. 81-229.**

D. Community College and University Faculty

Although large numbers of women attend post-secondary institutions of learning, they are still taught by a predominantly male faculty. Women made up 36.24% of the 1,920 full-time faculty teaching in community colleges in B.C. during 1988-89. At the university level, women made up only 16.85% of the 3,065 full-time faculty in B.C. universities during the same year (Statistics Canada, 1989, Report 81-229). This reflects the national situation, where women hold 18.67% of all faculty positions in Canadian universities (reported by Cordua-Von Specht, March 1990).

Here, as elsewhere in the system, females are over-represented in the traditional areas of Education, Human and Social Development and Nursing; under-represented in administrative roles and Mathematics and Sciences. For instance, at the University of British Columbia during 1989-90 women made up only 5.26% of full-time faculty in Graduate Studies, only 8.14% in Science, and 17.14% in Dentistry. There were no full-time women faculty in Forestry. On the other hand, 31.69% of Education faculty and 21.77% of Arts faculty were women (reported in UBC Factbook, 6th edition, 1989). The picture is similar at both the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University.

Female faculty tend to be clustered in untenured and part-time positions suggesting systemic barriers to training and advancement and perpetuating the absence of role models for female students.

IV

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Current enrollment figures indicate that approximately equal numbers of boys and girls enter the elementary and post secondary school systems. Despite this initial gender balance the educational experiences appear to be quite different for boys and girls. There are a number of gender inequalities in the B.C. education system.

Subject participation is one of the most obvious examples of gender imbalance in the education system. Both at the secondary and post-graduate levels, females are under-represented in the traditionally male dominated courses such as mathematics and sciences. The fact that female students are less likely to take math and science courses has obvious consequences for their futures by limiting the opportunities available to them once they leave school.

Sex role stereotypes are transmitted both directly and indirectly to students and help shape their attitudes towards education and their future aspirations. One source of influence on students is the education system itself. This system perpetuates sex role stereotypes through gender imbalances in staffing and subject assignment. In schools women teach primarily the lower grades and traditionally female subject areas such as languages and home economics. In post secondary institutions women are again in traditional areas, such as education, arts, languages and nursing. Girls and young women have few role models to encourage their participation in leadership roles or in fields such as science and engineering.

There is some evidence in the literature that the supportive and cooperative leaderships models that women can bring to administration may be particularly effective in school settings (Fishel & Pottker, 1975, 1977; Frasher & Frasher, 1979). The small percentage of women in school administration indicates that the system is not using its female employees to the best advantage.

As we continue implementation of the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education, there is a wider acceptance of the concept of equality between women and men. More women continue on to post-secondary education, the majority of women participate for most of their adult lives in the work force, and there are more women visible in political structures. However the vast majority of women still cluster in low paying, stereotypical "helping" roles. Their roles within organizations rarely rise above middle-management and wages remain consistently less than two-thirds of those of working men.

The school system continues to reflect and perpetuate traditional roles for girls and women. Although females make up at least half of the student and teaching populations, they are channeled into traditional fields and are strikingly under-represented in school administration.

In response to the Sullivan Royal Commission the following Mission Statement was formulated:

> *The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.*

The current gender imbalance in the school system suggests that the full potential of individuals is not being realized and that students, male and female, are not adequately prepared to participate equally in society.

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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